



## CBT and Me Part 3 – Changing Behaviors – VIDEO INTRO: <https://youtu.be/12AjKEQebdM>

Part 1 of this 3-part series was on **Thinking**, Part 2 was **Feelings**, and now part 3 is about **Behaviors**. Many people have behaviors they are trying to manage. This worksheet reviews some skills specific to changing \*negative behaviors (\*For the purpose of this exercise, to avoid being judgmental a “negative behavior” is any behavior that a person recognizes as unhealthy or otherwise not good for their self. People are encouraged to focus on their own behaviors for this exercise and not judge one another’s choices)

You are not alone if it has been challenging for you to change some behaviors and habits.

### Opening Discussion – Easy, Moderate, Difficult.

Discuss the following three questions about changing behaviors. Not everyone may have an answer for each one which is okay:

1. What is one behavior that you successfully changed in your life that went relatively **easily** for you?
2. What is a behavior you changed that was **moderately difficult** (You succeeded but it took time and effort)
3. What is a behavior that has been **difficult** for you to change, and why? (Addictions, habits, etc.)
  - Keep difficult/challenging behaviors in mind for the remainder of this exercise

### Behavior Change Using CBT

*Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* tells us that our behaviors are very often a product of our thoughts and feelings. Based on this concept then to change our behaviors we need to adjust our thoughts and manage our feelings. There are several ways that this can be done. This worksheet reviews some skills for adjusting thoughts and managing feelings that can perpetuate negative behaviors that we want to change/

Think before acting – This may sound like a cliché, but it is very true and very effective. When we **pause** before taking action there is a lot we can do to change what behaviors we decide to act on.

*Thoughts that can perpetuate negative behaviors* – As a group review the list on the following page and share examples from your own life if you have ever thought or said any of these things to yourself about a negative behavior or habit that you know you need to change.

*Keep in mind, that everyone has their struggles with changing some kind of behavior. Change can be quite challenging, and we all change at our pace so there is no shame if this process takes a long time and a lot of repeated efforts to get things going. **The point is not to give up trying**. Change can be a lifelong process, but the struggle is worth the rewards.*

**Review and discuss the statements on the following page:**



**The pattern of each statement to follow is:**

*Negative or distorted thought we may tell ourselves* – followed by more accurate and truthful explanation

*“One more time won’t hurt”* – It might, one more time often keeps the problem going and going

*“I’ll start tomorrow”* – Have you said this to yourself in the past? What often happens when tomorrow comes?

*“I don’t care”* – You may not care now but later if you don’t like the outcome might you care then?

*“This makes me feel good”* – Good temporarily maybe, but long term, negative behaviors may not feel so good

*“I don’t have what it takes”* – Yes you do, everyone has capacity to learn and improve even if its gradual

*“I am justified this time”* – Rationalizing a negative behavior is just an excuse to keep going down a bad road

*“I just can’t stop”* – It may be difficult, maybe the hardest thing you’ve done yet, but progress is still possible

*“They made me do it”* – No they didn’t “make you”, maybe they triggered you but coping skills can still help

*“Its just who I am”* – Maybe it is today who you think you are, but we all have potential for growth

*“I messed up again so I should give up”* – We all mess up, but we can all keep trying as long as we are alive

*“If my life was different, I could do this”* – That may be so, but change is still possible despite circumstances

*“I’ll never...”* – Never say never – People can do some amazing things they thought they never could

*“I’ll always...”* – Yes, there are some things we cannot change in life, but we can choose how we act and react

**Feelings-based distortions**

Discuss how we can erroneously use emotions as an excuse for negative behaviors:

*“I did (negative behavior) because I was \_\_\_\_\_ (Angry, offended, hurt, sad, depressed, embarrassed, etc.)*

Keep in mind feelings can be powerful triggers that can be challenging to deal with, however still we can develop skills for coping with feelings without making negative or harmful choices regarding our behaviors

**Take home thoughts for positive change:**

**What is at least one (or more) thought that you will try to work on changing to better manage behavior?**

**What is one (or more) encouraging and helpful statement you can start to practice telling yourself to inspire positive growth and steady progress?**